

Taught by One Who Was Called, Life Itself, He Became Something More Than Leader Among Doctors.

RELEASE

BY
I. A. R. WYLIE.

THEY were to have been married in a month's time. The brass plate with the double inscription, "Dr. Walter Uloth, Dr. Frances Wilmot," fastened to the newly varnished door of the new house, and every evening they made a deliberate detour to admire this silent witness to their coming partnership.

Both were so brilliant, so passionately attached to their profession; both outstanding personalities with all the magnetism of an uncompromising sincerity.

Dr. Uloth went up to the operating ward where he knew Frances Wilmot had been working. She came out as he reached the door. They walked together down the passage. In the hospital their attitude toward each other was rigidly impersonal, but he was too keen a psychologist not to be aware of some emotional trouble in her apart from the day's perplexities. He took her arm and pressed it. Emotion frightened and irritated him.

She drew away quietly. "Paula Finlay is dead," she said, "five minutes ago. I do not think she ought to have died."

Something in her tone galled him. "We couldn't do more than our best," he said. "From the point of view of science, we might as well admit it frankly—she is better dead."

"She knew," she told me. She saw in your face, a sort of disgust and reluctance," she said. "Of course, it's a little thing like that, but she wouldn't fight."

Her low, beautiful voice had lost its steadiness. They were passing his private office, and they went in. He was in that mood when a struggle is welcome.

"I'm sorry if I betrayed myself," he said. "Probably it was what she felt herself. Rightly, too. We shut up criminals and lunatics. There are people who are not less dangerous. One can't regret that."

"People like Paula Finlay?"

"Yes."

"What do you know about Paula Finlay?"

"Quite enough."

"To pass judgment?"

"If you like to put it that way."

He became aware of a prolonged silence. He looked up. She had taken off her engagement ring and laid it on the top of his papers. The one thought that flashed through his mind was that the action was childishly theatrical.

"I am a mere mortal," she said. "I don't see how a mere mortal and you, who consider yourself above mortal limitations, can work in partnership."

She broke into the incessant din of music.

"I'm Gyp Labelle."

"Come dance with me."

"You'll dance to my tune."

"Whatever it be."

She could sing. And after that one doggerel verse she made a gesture of good-humored contempt and danced. It was a wild, gymnastic, the delicious capering of a gutter urchin caught by a jolly tune. A long-haired youth jumped onto the stage from the stage box and swung her about him and over his shoulder, so that her plumes swept the ground and the great rosette of pearls made a chain of white light about them both.

"Those pearls," Uloth said to his companion, "Prince Rudolph gave them to her. And then he shot himself. He had no right, of course, but she wanted them."

McManus stirred impatiently. He did not answer.

Uloth had a queer conviction that secretly, in their hearts, the audience danced with her.

"I'm Gyp Labelle."

"Come dance with me."

Something had come into the theater that had not been there before. "We couldn't do more than our best," the business was to have a good time somehow, not to worry or care.

She had whirled catherine-wheel fashion, head over heels, from end to end of the stage, and stood with her thin arms stretched up straight toward the ceiling, her mouth still parted in that curious, empty, expectant smile.

The curtain fell.

"I want to get out," said McManus sharply. "It's this closeness."

The audience had begun to stream out. Two men who loitered in front of Uloth in the aisle exchanged laconic comments.

"A live wire, eh, what?"

The face of the second man who spoke was bloated and full of a weary intelligence.

"Life itself, my dear fellow; life itself."

Uloth took a month's holiday and McManus went with him down to the house on the Scotch moors where he was to have spent his honeymoon. For a week they tramped the hills together, stalked deer and fished in the salmon river. McManus was like a man who hugs a secret pleasure—whose eyes are continually turned inward on a desire.

On the eighth day he disappeared. He left a note behind him. He had to go back to town. Uloth was not to bother. Uloth followed in three days. McManus' lodging house he found a room littered like that of some young top, with half-opened boxes, new suits, shining unworn shoes and boots.

On the mantelpiece Uloth found a letter, which he read deliberately. The handwriting was a woman's. Large and sprawling and signed with a single, undecipherable initial. It agreed to a meeting at the Carlton before the "turn."

Uloth waited in the Carlton lounge an hour later. Then he saw McManus. He had a kind of angry, almost angry, look on his face. He was dressed in a suit of black, with a white shirt and a white tie. He was looking at Uloth with a kind of angry, almost angry, look on his face. He was dressed in a suit of black, with a white shirt and a white tie. He was looking at Uloth with a kind of angry, almost angry, look on his face.

month had to be paid for. She lay very still under the gorgeous quilt she had brought with her.

"Every one here promises not to tell," she said. "I'm just Mary Dubois. Even the undertaker's must not know."

He forced back the question which came instinctively to his lips. He had a conviction that he was fighting to save her sanity for the very ground on which he had built his life, and that he dared not yield by so much as a kindly word. He did what lay in his power for her, with a heart shut and barred.

She brought a little of her world and her whole outlook with her. On the last few days that she was able to sit up, she dressed herself in a gay mandarin's cap. By the open fire the old woman embroidered an elaborate nightgown.

"It's for my—what you call it—my shroud. You see, with ze blue ribbons—blue—blue—zeat's my color. As soon as I could speak, I ask for ze blue ribbons in my pinafore."

"I should have thought that now your mind might be better occupied," he retorted with a brutal commonplaceness.

"Oh, but I've 'ad my talk with monsieur le cure. 'E and I are ze best of friends. 'E understand about ze blue ribbons. But you—you are too clever, hein, monsieur le docteur?"

"It seems so," he said scornfully.

Once, at evening, Uloth came upon her with all her jewels spread about her—emeralds and pearls and diamonds—twinkling amid the creases of her coverlet. She put her finger to her lips.

"Sh! This is ver' solemn. I make my testament."

She picked up each jewel in turn and looked at it, caressing it. And yet there was no bitterness and no regret in her farewell of them. The old woman, crouched in the chair beside her, wrote tollfully on a slip of paper.

"She make a list of all. They will be sold for the little children of Paris—the gamins—as I was—for a good time—from Marie Dubois."

She beckoned him, and he came nearer suddenly. In her hand was a great pearl.

"Four vous, monsieur."

He shrank back. "No—I don't wear such things."

"For your wife, then?"

"I am not married."

"But one day perhaps." She looked at him with a wistful doubt. "Or perhaps it make you sad. It is not for that I give it you. When you see it, you laugh—just as you laugh when I dance, because I dance so ver' bad."

She laughed now, and then gray agony had her by the throat. She hid her face and he took the pearl from her, muttering.

That night he let her suffer. He fed her from her. He had begun defiling with a solitary inmate, and he tried to leave the house the old woman followed and caught hold of him.

"She suffer too much, monsieur. It is not right. I will not let it."

"I do my best," he flung at her savagely. "And who are you to interfere?"

"I am her mother."

He swung round to stare down into the lined and withered face. "Her mother? Why, good God—she treats you like a servant."

"Before others, monsieur le docteur. She is different—of different stuff. And if I want to be with 'er, it must be as 'er servant. That is our affair. But you are not kind. You let 'er suffer too much. I will not 'ave it."

She menaced him, and he was aware of an incredible fear.

"I will come at once," he stammered.

Later, when she slept her drugged sleep, he came back to look at her, and the old woman knelt beside her, bowed over her still hand, a rugged, motionless effigy of grief.

WALTER ULOTH had fought his way alone up a steep and cruel road to success. When some hope or other was shattered, he simply put his heel on his desire and went on so that he left the hospital that night without a sigh, without conscious suffering, and without protest. The episode was finished.

He resigned from the hospital. The new house was transformed into a nursing home for the aged patients came to him eagerly. His profession became his master and his religion. Only toward nightfall, when his brain wearied, he flung his work aside and stormed out of the house, walking rapidly rather than to the streets which never sleep.

It was on one such night that Keith McManus saw him and laid hold of him. McManus and he had roomed together in their desperate Edinburgh days. Their friendship had seemed a thing of the past, but for Uloth, for Uloth had despised McManus for his inferior abilities—but at least it endured. They met now as though days and not years had separated them.

"I didn't expect you were in England," Uloth said. "Why haven't you looked me up? Where have you been? You've been ill anyway."

McManus shrugged his stooping shoulders. "Oh, yes, I've been pretty bad. Studying bugs in a South African swamp. I've been in London a week, drifting round. Couldn't make up my mind to look up any one, not even you. That's how I am—fed up, up to the teeth."

"Yes, I can see."

"You me diagnosed already? Well, it's a damned state, Uloth. He laughed miserably. Uloth was looking across to the "Pavilion" opposite and mechanically spelling out the illuminated sign, "Gyp Labelle—Gyp Labelle." He heard himself answering a question. "No—no, that's not me. I killed a patient and lost a wife on the same day. I'm a free lance—quite free. What do you want to do? We neither of us need count the barbees now. Make a night of it. I've not done such things in my life—it's probably what you want."

McManus, too, was staring across the road with his dead eyes. "Good Lord, if I only knew! I'd be so thankful to want something."

His voice cracked. Uloth took him by the arm, much as he had taken Frances Wilmot by the arm months ago.

"Well, try first what the devil can do for you," he cried.

"I AM A MERE MORTAL," SHE SAID. "I DON'T KNOW HOW A MERE MORTAL AND YOU CAN WORK IN PARTNERSHIP."

Uloth followed the ugly old woman down the passage gorgeous and dim with an expensive orientalism.

The room was huge and square-bulld. The walls were hidden under eastern embroideries and silk divans were set haphazard on the mosaic floor. In the center a fountain of the modern-primitive school, banked with flowers, played noisily. There Uloth received a photograph of his wife, a fair-haired, wide-eyed, slightly bovine-looking creature. Uloth kept the picture on the table.

He bowed. "Thank you. I've wasted your time. You are infamous."

She shrugged her shoulders. "Eh bien—what can I do? Zey are all the same. Good-bye, Monsieur le docteur. You scare me stiff. But I like you."

THAT night McManus tried to force an entrance to the Kensington house, and the old woman, seconded by a Japanese servant, flung him down the steps into the arms of a policeman, who promptly arrested him. Uloth bailed him out.

The morning papers were full of it. It was one more feather in Gyp Labelle's cap. McManus sailed for South Africa with a medical mission to die, as he said—but three months later Uloth received a photograph of his wife, a fair-haired, wide-eyed, slightly bovine-looking creature. Uloth kept the picture on the table.

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THE TONS OF PENNIES.

WHEN one puts his penny into the slot and gets his correct weight of chocolate, he seldom thinks of the other pennies dropped that very hour into other machines. The companies that own these automatic venders receive tons of pennies, which they turn back into circulation through the United States subtreasury, for banks refuse to handle pennies unless they are counted and packed in rolls, and the slot machine companies would require so large a force of clerks to do it that their profits would be seriously diminished.

The problem of counting pennies for deposit in the subtreasury in New York is simple. They are weighed like so many bullets on a scale that registers, not pounds and ounces but dollars and cents.

The collections from the slot machines, however, do not go directly to the weighing machines. The coins must first be sorted, for they are mixed with all kinds of refuse, lead weights, buttons, bangles and counterfeits, put into the slot either in a spirit of mischief or to defraud the company. The boys who collect the sorting wear antiseptic gloves.

The refuse from the sorting process is usually valueless, although now and then gold pieces, bits of jewelry or gold and silver charms, engraved with tender inscriptions, find their way into the iron throat of the machine. These are sold to jewelers for a few cents. Hundreds of foreign pennies and many coins of higher value are found in the machines, but there through carelessness.

So, the owners of the penny-in-the-slot machines have more trouble with the actual money they receive than with the business. On lower Broadway it is an uncommon sight to see a wagonload of pennies going to the treasury; in appearance it is only a load of canvas sacks, but really it is a clumsy embarrassment of riches.

ABRUPTLY, the orchestra caught hold of Uloth. It was playing something that he had heard before, at restaurants where he had gone with Frances Wilmot. The stage, set with a stereotyped drawing room, was empty, as the curtain rose. Two dead-white hands, loaded with emeralds, held the black hanging over the center doorway, then parted them brusquely, letting through the brilliant, shining figure of a woman. She stood there, her fair head with its monstrous crest of many-colored ostrich plumes flaming against the dead background. Her dress, openly scanty, showed the lines of a body almost too slender and supple as a rapier. But she wore jewels that clothed her. And each one of them had its romance, its scandal. It was part of the show that she should show the jewels. "Hullo, every one!" she said, tentatively, gaily.

She began to laugh then, as she laughed every night at the same moment, spontaneously, shrilly, helplessly, until suddenly she had them. It was like a whirlwind. Even Uloth felt it at his throat, a choking, senseless laughter. He knew that McManus was leaning forward, flung headlong out of his apathy, almost angry.

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THE BUSIEST SPOTS.

IT is said that the most crowded spot in the world for five and a half days of the week is that small tract of desert, bounded by the British Royal Exchange, the Bank of England and the Mansion House (city hall) of the city of London. This has been described as "the city's nerve center." In the course of each day no fewer than 500,000 persons pass and repass, together with 50,000 vehicles.

And the busiest corner of all in this busy area is immediately outside the Mansion House, for more than half the traffic crossing the imaginary line between the city and the suburbs is concentrated there. The result of a traffic census taken by the city police shows that on an average day some 30,000 vehicles pass this particular corner, while the pedestrian traffic is well over 250,000, and these figures are constantly increasing.

It is in this country that one naturally seeks for big figures to back up a "city nerve center" where nearly 400,000 people pass and repass on foot during the day. In New York the figures approach those of London, and largely exceed it, if one counts the actual number of persons on foot and in vehicles. On Broadway, at the junction of 34th street, this includes the passengers on surface cars, the foot passengers alone being well under 500,000.



SHE STOOD THERE, HER FAIR HEAD WITH ITS MONSTROUS CREST OF MANY-COLORED OSTRICH PLUMES FLAMING AGAINST THE DEAD BACKGROUND.